

## **A Word from our General Presbyter Ed Thompson**

Michael Anderson passed away on November 19. David Pettry passed away on October 24. Michael served as the pastor of St. Mary's Presbyterian Church. David was the pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Colcord; Marsh Fork United Presbyterian Church, Dry Creek; and Clear Creek Presbyterian Church. The first time their names appeared in the Presbytery directory was 1998, so as far as I can tell, they both had been serving those congregations for about 20 years.

I had the chance to visit with each of them one time before they died. I had tried to visit David on several occasions while he was doing chemotherapy at Thomas Hospital in South Charleston, but I was only able to get the timing right once. Sometimes, I'd get there after he had left. Other times, I'd get his schedule mixed up and get there on the wrong day. I made a trip to visit Michael back in February and then stopped by to see him another time in August when I was up that way; I didn't think to call ahead, though, and he wasn't at home when I got there. In each case, I could have done more but I didn't. I thought I had more time, but I was wrong.

So this is a story of regret and priorities, as well as hindsight. It serves as a reminder to me and a suggestion to you that we don't always have as much time as we'd like to have or as much time as we think we have. In Ephesians 4:26, we read, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." That's good advice, to be sure. But we need to do more than that. Don't leave home without kissing your spouse. End each phone call by telling your children you love them. Touch base with your parents once a week. If you've stopped talking to your siblings, do what's necessary to restore the relationship. Visit shut-ins, people who are hospitalized, and those in nursing homes while you still can.

I'm not saying this to make you feel guilty. God knows we all have more than enough to do, and there's never enough time to do everything. I get that. In some ways, life is a matter of triage. We're always making choices about what to do and what we think is important. But again, we don't always have as much time as we think we have.

If I had the chance to visit both men one last time, I'd tell them this. "Thank you for your faithful ministry. You've done a good job in what others might see as a challenging situation. You've hung in there for far longer than many other people would have. You've touched the lives of a lot of people. You've made a difference in the name of Jesus Christ. Cancer may take your life, but it can't take away what you've done. Well done, good and faithful servant."

I didn't get a chance to say it to them, but I can say it to you. The bottom line is Who do you need to visit? Who do you need to thank? Who has made/is making a difference in your life? Let them know. We can't change the past but we can certainly do things differently in the future, and we can use the time that we have now to care for and support one another.